



## **Governor Renews Call for Federal Emergency Declaration**

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**Governor Schwarzenegger today renewed his request to President Bush to declare California a federal state of emergency for California's levee system.**

- By making this request, the Governor is once again taking a leadership role in protecting the public safety of California's citizens. He also again called for full cooperation and assistance from federal agencies in the accomplishment of the emergency work.

**A federal emergency declaration, combined with the Governor's emergency declaration, allows the state to streamline the permitting processes to help ensure that levee repairs can be made quickly. This action cuts the repair process from the normal three years down to less than one – getting critical repairs underway before the next flood season.**

- On February 22, Governor Schwarzenegger and Senator Dianne Feinstein led a Congressional delegation on an aerial tour of Central Valley levees to view first hand the deteriorating flood control system. Two days later, the Governor declared a state of emergency for the State's levee system.

**Governor Schwarzenegger issued an executive order (S-01-06), directing the Department of Water Resources to immediately develop a plan to accomplish levee repairs this year and take all necessary steps to make it happen.**

**There is no time to wait – we must start today to be ready for the next major storm. The public safety of all Californians is in jeopardy if we do not act now.**

- The California Department of Water Resources document "Flood Warnings: Responding to California's Flood Crisis," submitted to the Legislature in January 2005 identified major deficiencies and challenges to the flood control system in the California Central Valley.
- A catastrophic levee failure in Sacramento and other urban areas would flood tens of thousands of homes and major transportation corridors. It would also result in significant environmental impacts and long lasting devastation to both local and State economies.
- The California Department of Water Resources testified before the Legislature that a magnitude 6.5 earthquake in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta region would likely result in a catastrophic levee failure. Such an event would reduce the drinking water supply for 24 million citizens in California, and could also

result in the permanent loss of critical habitat for endangered species around the Delta.

- A majority of California's agriculture industry is dependent on water from the Delta and a catastrophic levee failure would result in cessation of pumping capacity for as much as 18 months, causing at least \$30-\$40 billion in economic damage to the State.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the California Department of Water Resources has identified 24 critical erosion sites on project levees in the Sacramento and San Joaquin River Flood Control systems that need to be repaired before a catastrophic levee failure occurs. The Governor's emergency declaration and executive order will ensure that these sites are repaired before the next flood season, and that other potentially critical levee erosion sites that need repair are identified.

## **Letter from Governor Schwarzenegger to President Bush Requesting Federal Disaster Declaration for California Levees**

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger today sent the following letter to President Bush requesting a federal disaster declaration for California levees.

February 27, 2006

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Through:

Ms. Karen Armes, Acting Regional Director  
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region IX  
1111 Broadway, Suite 1200  
Oakland, California 94607-4052

Dear Mr. President,

On February 24, 2006 I proclaimed a state of emergency for the California levee system due to the imminent threat of catastrophic levee failure.

Under the provisions of Section 501(a) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. § 5121-5206 (Stafford Act), and implemented by Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations § 206.35, I request that, as a result of this imminent threat, you also declare an emergency for the State of California, focusing first on 24 identified critical levee erosion sites located on project levees in the counties of Colusa, Sacramento, Solano, Sutter, Yolo, and Yuba, and then on additional critical levee erosion sites as they are identified.

These 24 critical erosion sites, identified in a report by consultants for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in cooperation with the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) dated December 29, 2005, represent the gravest danger of catastrophic levee failure and the highest priority for repair of the identified erosion sites. Only eight of these critical sites have been scheduled for repair in 2006, but these projects are in jeopardy due to the lack of federal funding. The other 16 sites have had only cursory review and there is no scheduled plan to repair them. At the current rate of progress, it could take more than four years to complete rehabilitation work at these 24 sites. California cannot wait that long because of the grave threat posed by a catastrophic levee failure. Therefore, I have directed that the full resources of the State of California be utilized to repair these critical sites before the next flood season and am seeking federal assistance to achieve this goal.

Mr. President, during the past two flood seasons, severe weather conditions have caused me to proclaim states of emergency in as many as 42 counties. In fact, as you know, less than two months ago I proclaimed states of emergency covering 34 counties in California and those same counties were declared disaster areas by the Federal government. These storms alone caused more than an estimated \$400 million in disaster-related damages throughout California's coastal areas and the Central Valley, and further weakened critical erosion sites on project levees along the Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers.

Increasingly severe weather systems each season have accelerated the deterioration of the state's levee system to the point where they are now in danger of failing during the next major rainfall or earthquake. This worsening situation creates conditions of extreme peril to the public and property protected by the levees, to the environment, and to the very foundation of California's economy.

*March 17, 2006*

The California Central Valley flood control system consists of approximately 1,600 miles of project levees maintained by the DWR, various local governments and special districts, and thousands of miles of non-project levees. This intricately balanced system protects more than 500,000 people, two million acres of developed agricultural land, and structures worth at least \$50 billion. The system is aging and deteriorating and, in some places, literally washing away. Over the years, major storms and flooding have taken many California lives, caused significant property losses, and resulted in extensive damage to public and private infrastructure in the Central Valley. Devastating storms in 1997 drove 120,000 people from their homes, resulting in one of the largest mass evacuations in the state's history, and caused damage to more than 30,000 residences and businesses. More recently, the Upper Jones Tract levee failure, in June 2004, produced more than \$100 million in repairs and disaster-related losses.

Pursuant to 44 CFR § 206.35, I have determined that this incident is of such severity and magnitude that effective response is beyond the capabilities of the state and affected local governments, and that supplementary federal assistance is necessary to save lives, protect property, public health, and safety, or to lessen or avert the threat of a disaster. I am specifically requesting federal assistance to accomplish emergency protective measures as allowed under the Public Assistance Program. I would also like to request that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) interpret Stafford Act criteria as broadly as possible to encompass and reimburse the wide array of activities that may be needed to alleviate this emergency.

Preliminary estimates of the costs needed to repair the 24 critical erosion sites are between \$75 and \$100 million. The types and amount of emergency assistance needed under the Stafford Act and from other federal agencies under other statutory authorities are expected to exceed \$56 million (75% share) and are tabulated in [Enclosure A](#).

In order to alleviate the conditions of this emergency, DWR has worked cooperatively with the Corps under the Sacramento River Bank Protection Program. Under this program, the Corps repairs severely eroded sites and cost-shares the work with the state on a 75 percent (federal)/ 25 percent (state) basis. The state committed \$6.1 million for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2005/06 and I have proposed \$4.9 million for SFY 2006/07. I certify that for this emergency, the state and local governments will assume all applicable nonfederal share of the costs required by the Stafford Act.

I have designated Mr. Henry R. Renteria, Director of the Governor's Office of Emergency Services, as the State Coordinating Officer for this request. He will work with FEMA, on my behalf, to provide any additional information or justification that may be needed.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger

*March 17, 2006*